

NSC BRIEFING

12 August 1954

CHINA FLOOD

- I. Chinese Communists now admit flood damage amounts to major disaster.
 - A. Before, insisted things under control, damage slight.
 - B. Now admit 6% China's cultivated land flooded--this some 23,000 square miles, nearly size Indiana.
 - C. Most in rice-rich Central China; normally grows over 10% China's food.
- II. Peiping genuinely surprised.
 - A. Fooled by temporary Yangtze drop at Hankow--late July.

But river rose again: by 10

August, all-time record

height--57 feet (previous

high, in 1931 flood, 53-1/2

feet). *by 12 August, 51 inches above
1931.*

III. 1931 flood worst in modern Chinese
history.

A. Affected an area of 95,000
square miles: did US \$1.3
billion damage.

B. Washed out millions in cities,
also 25 million farmers.

IV. Present food purchases abroad
insufficient to meet disaster.

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C. Moreover, Peiping committed to export 270,000 tons rice to Ceylon for rubber; 200,000 tons to USSR.

V. Peiping's public admission flood damage suggests might now welcome foreign relief.

C. Soviet aid likely: Pravda first noted flood on 9 August.

D. Peiping's prestige in Orbit, Sino-Soviet "friendship" make posture necessary.

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VI. Also precedent for Communist acceptance Western relief.

A. East Germany, Hungary have accepted US flood relief, Rumania politely declined, Czechoslovakia has not replied. Hungary also accepted Dutch offer of 50,000 guilders (US \$13,000).

B. East German propaganda plays acceptance of US offer as expression policy of "furthering...international understanding."

VII. Peiping's position more awkward re possible US offer.

A. Has always denied possibility of "genuine friendly aid" from US.

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- [REDACTED]
- B. Internal program relies more heavily on anti-American propaganda than do Satellites.
 - C. Would certainly prefer aid from Orbit, Asian "neutrals" or other recognizing states.

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